# 02081

c. 1968/03/20

March 19, 1968 | Vice Pres'y, Fortas, Clarestian, Tom Johnson, McNamara.

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By ___, NARS, Date 10-11-83

tax - minimum $10 billion
cuts - appropriations $10 billion
expenditures - $5 billion

Rusk. major peace proposals, about cessation of bombing, nothing.
cessation of bombing, about enemy initiatives, dangerous.

Hanoi's rejections have divided us. Essentially we are together.
I'm not sure what the effect wd be of a call-up of troops
and stand-down of bombing.

Rostow: Down the line (but not now) we hope to get Thieu to
accept NLF as part of political system. We can't
press him openly on this.
Appeal to Hanoi to focus on talks, away from battle.

Rusk: Element of hope has been taken away by TET offensive.
People don't think there is likely to be an end.

MacBundy: Right. Great fall-off in support
Hell of statement now is "here they come again,
with $30 billion now forever instead of $25 billion".
Can we convey impression that we are ready
for peace by saying "this is about the US share"?
People agree with the objectives, but wonder what it
will cost.

Clifford: Objectives:
1) Reiterate importance of Vietnam. Be still really

important, w/in framework of other challenges.

Danger to SE Asia.

Why more troops? People were glad to learn last Fall that there wd be a limit of 525,000. Now being exceeded.

1) * Dennis said O.K. if the re-inforcement is needed to protect the troops who are already there.

2) * Also important to mention enemy's movement of new troops.

3) * Next 3 or 4 mos could be a critical time in the war.

Is this an American war, are we just replacing SVN?

Cite: GVN efforts.

Do we have anything to offer besides new war?

Reasonableness. Hanoi's unreasonableness.

We offer a program of de-escalation of the war? A gradual approach. Beginning of de-escalation.

* Stop all bombing N of 20°. -- if in turn the enemy would stop their artillery, rockets and mortars from DMZ area into South Vietnam. (This is acceptable to Wheeler).

If you accept this, we'll have another offer. If you accept that, we'll have still another.

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Rusk: This wd mean we wd still bomb in DMZ area?

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Bundy: don't need to trade. Just stop.

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Clifford: Alternature is that in exchange for stopping NVN

wd get out of DMZ.

Bundy: Still don't see trade necessity. This speech needs a "left hook"

Clifford: They may not accept our offer, but it is a firm one, better than rhetoric.

Rusk: Agree w/ Bundy. Say "whether or not Hanoi will take advantage of this we don't know. But let's see

Bundy: You'd resume if there were major attacks, or complete silence over long period of time. Bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong, doesn't do much.

Pres: It sure enrages the world.

Goldberg: Unless it is a meaningful ~~good faith~~ offer for peace, don't make it. Stand your ground. "I've tried, but it didn't work".

The only thing that offers possibility of talks is cessation of bombing.

American people only respond badly when our peace offers don't work. They want results.

Recommend trying to get direct US-Hanoi talks. Needn't involve the settlement in the South. (Hanoi says NLF will decide the South). You could get those with a bombing pause.

Shelling across DMZ? Make that 1st order of business in the talks.

"2-handed" approach will not succeed this time. "De-escalation" won't succeed as a policy initiative if it'

accompanied by additional forces.

Clifford: But maybe it would if it tied to NVN action.

Rostow: I think Hanoi-Haiphong bombing has far greater impact on world opinion than troop increases in South Vietnam

Pres: Standing down bombing gets the hawks furious.

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Rusk: "I'll stop the bombing if the 2 coalitionmen and 3 members of ICC meet and make themselves available for all parties.

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Pres: Bunker's argument is that any overture would hurt SVN

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Fortas: Limited obj for speech: need for troops + economy.
Specific peace moves will be lost in this speech.
Offer will be taken as sign of weakness.
People's feeling of discontent is over whether the effort is being prosecuted intelligently and firmly.
Our combination of war and peace is confusing.
Troop reinforcement: strength + resoluteness.
Dramatize SVN involvement.

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Clifford: In WWII, "prevail we will" would work because conditions were right. Now they aren't.

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Bill Bundy: Sit is worse than most can agine in I Corps

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Goldberg: Can we continue this effort without erosion of public confidence

Pres: We are missing two things when we include peace initiatives. Let's make it troops + war. Later we can revive and extend our peace initiatives.